DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 463 UD 034 735

TITLE	Dropout Study: A Report to the 77th Texas Legislature.
INSTITUTION	Texas Education Agency, Austin.; Texas State Auditor's Office, Austin.; Texas State Legislative Budget Board, Austin.
REPORT NO	GE1-600-02
PUB DATE	2000-12-00
NOTE	51p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publications Distribution Office, Texas Education Agency, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78701-1494. For full text: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/dropout/rider71study.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Data Interpretation; *Dropout Rate; *Dropouts; Graduation; Research Methodology; Secondary Education; Student Attrition
IDENTIFIERS	State Policy; *Texas

ABSTRACT

This report presents findings and recommendations from a study of the current system used to identify and report Texas students who do not graduate from high school or who drop out of school before enrolling in high school, required by the Legislative Budget Board, State Auditor's Office, and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Dropout rates published by the Texas Education Agency have been criticized for not presenting an accurate picture of the dropout phenomenon in Texas public schools. The recommendations address three areas in which reporting of the current annual dropout rate has been criticized: dropout definition, dropout rate calculation, and data quality. The report focuses on: "State Policy Overview" (current statutory requirements, overview of TEA, dropout data processing, and state policy history); "Dropout Definition" (history of TEA definition, data processing refinements, and National Center for Education Statistics data); "Dropout Rate Calculation" (annual dropout rate, longitudinal completion and dropout rates, and attrition rate); and "Data Quality" (Public Education Information Management System, or PEIMS, resources and accountability safeguards and consequences of inaccurate reporting). The four appendixes feature: leaver reasons coded for 1997-98 and 1998-99 leavers, PEIMS leaver reason codes and documentation requirements, historical annual dropout rates by student groups, and dropout data collection and reporting in other states. (Contains 18 references.) (SM)

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Dropout Study:

A Report to the 77th Texas Legislature

Legislative Budget Board
State Auditor's Office
Texas Education Agency

December 2000

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December 11, 2000

The Honorable George W. Bush, Governor of Texas
The Honorable Rick Perry, Lieutenant Governor of Texas
The Honorable Pete Laney, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Members of the 77th Texas Legislature

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Rider 71 of the 2000-01 General Appropriations Act (House Bill 1, 76th Texas Legislature, Regular Session) required the Legislative Budget Board, State Auditor's Office, and TEA to conduct a study of the current system used to identify and report students who do not graduate from high school or those who drop out of school before enrolling in high school. Also, the study must determine the actual number and percentage of students who do not complete high school within four years of enrolling in 9th grade, disaggregated by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The study must include recommendations on whether the current method of reporting dropouts (or leavers) should be replaced and/or augmented by data based upon the number of students completing high school. If the study recommends a new method or system, it must identify when it should be implemented and used by school districts. Findings and recommendations are to be reported to the Legislature and Governor no later than January 1, 2001.

This report, *Dropout Study: A Report to the 77th Texas Legislature,* presents the findings and recommendations from that study. The report presents an overview of state policy related to the dropout rate calculation, including current statutory requirements, TEA dropout data processing, and state policy history. Findings and recommendations address three areas in which the current annual dropout rate has been criticized – Dropout Definition, Dropout Rate Calculation, and Data Quality.

If you require additional information, please contact the staff listed on the back of the title page.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dropout Study:

A Report to the 77th Texas Legislature

Legislative Budget Board
State Auditor's Office
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December 2000

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Introduction and Executive Summary

Dropout rates published by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), a key component of the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), have been criticized in recent years for not presenting an accurate picture of the dropout phenomenon in Texas public schools. TEA Rider 71 of the General Appropriations Act (House Bill 1, 76th Texas Legislature, Regular Session) directed the Legislative Budget Board, State Auditor's Office, and TEA to conduct a study of the current system used to identify and report students who do not graduate from high school or those who drop out of school before enrolling in high school. Also, the study must determine the actual number and percentage of students who do not complete high school within four years of enrolling in 9th grade. This report presents the findings and recommendations from that study. The recommendations address three areas in which the current annual dropout rate has been criticized.

Dropout Definition. Critics point out that because the TEA definition of a dropout is a product of the accountability system, it excludes some groups of students who typically would be considered dropouts. The agency's definition excludes students for two policy reasons: (1) to avoid providing unintended incentives for district behavior that is not in the best interests of students and (2) to avoid unfairly penalizing districts and campuses through the rating system. The exclusion of these students from the dropout count results in a lower dropout rate.

Dropout Rate Calculation. Critics of the dropout rate calculation used by TEA in the accountability system question the ability of an annual indicator to accurately portray the success or failure of districts and campuses to keep students in school until they graduate. As a snapshot of school dropouts over a single year, the annual dropout indicator measures a different group of students over a more limited period of time than other calculations, such as a longitudinal dropout or high school completion rate, and produces a lower rate as a result.

Data Quality. Critics have questioned whether the school leaver data system has adequate safeguards against undercounting dropouts due to poor data quality or misreporting by school districts. Data used to rate public school districts and campuses undergo screening as part of an accountability system safeguards audit process designed to assess data integrity. Nevertheless, given the high stakes associated with use of the dropout rate in the accountability system, and the absence of a routine audit of every district's dropout data submission, concern about the accuracy of the dropout data submitted by school districts remains high.

Recommendations

The purpose of the following recommendations is to improve the validity of the dropout measure without compromising other characteristics of the accountability rating system that help ensure a fair and equitable rating process. Recommendations that require a change in statute are followed by the appropriate Texas Education Code (TEC) citation.

Dropout Definition

1. ***Report the NCES Dropout Rate.*** In addition to current dropout reporting, report annual dropout rates for the state and school districts under the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition.

   The NCES dropout definition is a nationally accepted definition and produces rates that can be compared to other states. It includes many categories of school leavers that have been removed from the TEA dropout definition for accountability evaluation purposes. TEA would report the NCES rate to provide an independent assessment of Texas' progress on dropouts compared to other states, but still retain a separate set of district and campus dropout indicators for use in the accountability system. TEA should work with the commissioner of education's Policy Committee on Public Education Information to develop a proposal for collecting the data needed to comply with the NCES definition.

Dropout Rate Calculation

2. ***Add a Grade 9-12 Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rate.*** Include Grade 9-12 longitudinal completion/student status rates among the performance indicators reported in the AEIS district and campus reports. Endorse the commissioner of education's plan to incorporate a longitudinal measure of completion/student status in district and campus accountability ratings.

   Underlying concern about dropouts is the desire that, after four years of high school, all students in Texas possess the skills needed to succeed in their future pursuits. How well Texas schools are accomplishing this goal is more directly measured by tracking a class of students through their high school careers, rather than relying on a single-year snapshot of all students in Grades 7-12. Commissioner of Education Jim Nelson has recommended that a high school (Grades 9-12) completion/student status rate replace or supplement the current annual dropout rate in the accountability rating system, starting in school year 2003-04. The redesigned accountability rating system incorporating the new Texas Assessment of Academic Skills testing program will be introduced that year. A commissioner's accountability focus group will develop a specific proposal for phase-in of this recommendation, including establishing definitions and standards. Exhibit 1 shows Grade 9-12 longitudinal completion/student status rates and numbers for 1998-99.

3. ***Eliminate Projected Rates.*** Repeal statute requiring TEA to report projected rates. (TEC §39.182)

   The number of different dropout definitions and methods of calculating dropout rates have led to confusion about the meaning of the dropout rate as a measure of school performance. Projected dropout rates seem to have little practical value because they hold constant or fluctuate based on the assumptions in the projection methodology.

Data Quality

4. ***Improve the Data Submission Process.***
   - Extend the resubmission deadline for the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) fall data submission.
   - Simplify and clarify PEIMS leaver reason codes and documentation requirements.
   - Any time legislation requiring a change in leaver data reporting requirements is enacted, establish effective dates that allow districts sufficient time to modify data reporting systems and train staff.
   - Improve matching of student records from different PEIMS data submissions.
   - Offer continuing education credit to individuals who complete PEIMS training.

5. ***Report a Data Quality Measure.***
   - Report a measure of dropout data quality, such as percent underreported students or percent of students whose status cannot be determined due to data errors, on the annual district and campus AEIS reports.

6. ***Strengthen Leaver Data Auditing and Penalties.***
   - Direct school district independent financial auditors to audit submitted leaver codes, perhaps in a sample of districts. (TEC §44.008)
   - Phase in additional analyses of leaver data as part of the comprehensive desk audits of school district leaver data submissions, and investigate districts with irregularities.
   - Lower the threshold for the number and percentage of underreported students that triggers a data investigation, and continue to attach accountability rating consequences to high numbers or percentages of underreported students.
   - Add to the accreditation sanctions currently available to the commissioner of education sanctions designed specifically for use in districts with serious and systematic data reporting problems. (TEC §39.131)

Exhibit 1

Texas Education Agency
Grade 9-12 Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates
for Texas Public Schools — 1998-99

	Graduated	Received GED	Continuing Students	Dropped Out	Total Students
State	79.5% (189,441)	4.0% (9,524)	8.0% (19,084)	8.5% (20,231)	238,280
African American	74.7% (23,475)	3.1% (988)	10.6% (3,331)	11.6% (3,642)	31,436
Asian/Pacific Islander	87.4% (6,110)	2.2% (153)	6.3% (437)	4.2% (292)	6,992
Hispanic	70.6% (56,126)	3.5% (2,789)	12.8% (10,187)	13.1% (10,436)	79,538
Native American	81.4% (589)	5.2% (38)	6.8% (49)	6.6% (48)	724
White	86.2% (103,141)	4.6% (5,556)	4.2% (5,080)	4.9% (5,813)	119,590
Economically Disadvantaged	71.3% (48,204)	3.8% (2,562)	11.8% (7,991)	13.1% (8,882)	67,639

Source: TEA analysis of PEIMS 1994-95 — 1999-2000.

The longitudinal completion/student status rate for the class of 1998-99 tracks students who began Grade 9 in 1995-96. Students who transfer in over the years are added to the original class as it progresses through the grade levels; students who transfer out are subtracted from the class. The rate has three components: high school graduates, GED recipients, and continuing students. Dropouts make up a fourth component. Students are classified based on their status the fall following their expected graduation date. The longitudinal rate is based on the same definition of dropouts used in the TEA annual dropout rate.

Other Issues

Missing In-State Transfers. In 1998-99, there were 32,798 students, 21 percent of the 155,867 students reported as in-state transfers by districts, who could not be found in the enrollment records submitted by other districts. Districts are not required to track students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere to confirm that they do re-enroll. Documentation at the time the student withdraws from school that shows the intent is to enroll elsewhere has been considered sufficient evidence that the student is not a dropout under both the Texas and national definitions. This documentation is typically a withdrawal form signed by the parent, although other types of documentation are accepted (see Appendix B). For the majority of students (79%) this practice has proven to be justified – the students are found in enrollment files or other data files. It is likely that some of the missing in-state transfers are the result of student records that did not match, and students who instead enrolled in private schools, alternative schools or GED preparation programs, or were being home schooled. It is also possible that some never returned to school.

There are two issues related to missing in-state transfers. One is a data quality concern – that districts may be misreporting students as intending to enroll elsewhere without sufficient documentation. The second is a dropout definition concern – that students who fail to re-enroll elsewhere are never counted as dropouts. Districts with unusually high percentages of missing in-state transfers are investigated as part of the accountability system safeguards audit process. The percentage of students whose enrollment could not be verified dropped from 31 percent in 1997-98 to 21 percent in 1998-99. ***This report recommends that audit processes be strengthened to ensure districts are correctly coding students who leave school and that matching of student records from different data submissions be improved.***

Two other options are: (1) require districts to verify subsequent enrollment for students who leave with intent to enroll in another Texas public school district or (2) include students whose enrollment cannot be verified by TEA in the dropout count at the district or state level. Option 1 would require districts to track all 155,867 students to their new schools, since the districts would not know in advance which students would fail to enroll. This would impose a significant new data burden on districts to verify documentation that typically consists of a withdrawal form signed by the parents. In option 2, TEA would automatically add all students reported as in-state transfers to the dropout count if enrollment in another school district cannot be verified. The primary drawback to adding unverified transfers to the dropout count is that the status of these students is not known. Some may be dropouts, but others may be the result of data errors or students whose status would not be considered dropping out. Adding students who may not be dropouts to the dropout rate would distort the meaning of the dropout measure and decrease its effectiveness as a performance indicator.

Underreported Students. Underreported students, those prior-year Grade 7-12 students for whom districts fail to submit a leaver or enrollment record the following fall, are not factored into the dropout calculation. The number of underreported students declined from 67,841 in 1997-98 to 21,432 in 1998-99. It is estimated that as many as half of the 1998-99 underreported students may be the result of student records that did not match. Most of the remaining underreported students result from failure of school districts to submit enrollment records for students who returned in the fall or leaver records for graduates, dropouts, and other leavers.

A new accountability rating category, *Suspended: Data Inquiry*, has been established for districts and campuses with serious and systematic data reporting problems, such as excessive numbers of underreported students. Also, districts that exceed a threshold for the number or percentage of underreported students cannot be rated higher than *Academically Acceptable*. ***This report recommends that audit processes be strengthened to ensure that districts are reporting all dropouts, that matching of student records from different data submissions be improved, that accountability rating consequences for underreporting continue, and that a measure of dropout data quality be added to AEIS reports.***

Another option would be to count all underreported students as dropouts. The primary drawback to this proposal is that including underreported students in the dropout rate would change it from a dropout measure to a combined measure of dropouts and data reporting problems. Trying to use the dropout definition to correct a data quality problem would produce a dropout rate that is no longer meaningful as an indicator of educational performance.

Why Is the TEA Dropout Rate Low?

The concern underlying much of the criticism of the annual dropout rate for Texas reported by TEA is that it understates the problem of dropouts in Texas. Following are some of the reasons the TEA dropout rate is low.

Dropout Definition

- **Grades covered.** By law, the TEA dropout rate includes students in Grades 7 and 8. Because these students drop out at a much lower rate than high school students, including them brings down the average. The Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate for 1998-99 was ***1.6*** percent compared to ***2.2*** percent for Grades 9-12.

- **Data processing enhancements.** An automated data search allows TEA to remove students from the dropout count who are found to be enrolled elsewhere or to have graduated or received a GED certificate. Although these students would not be considered dropouts under most definitions, a less sophisticated data processing system would not be able to identify and remove them. (Few states collect individual student level data. Appendix D compares dropout information for many states.) Had these students not been excluded, the annual dropout rate would have increased .5 percentage points in 1998-99 – from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.1*** percent.

- **Accountability definition.** Some categories of students who would typically be considered dropouts are removed from the dropout count to avoid unintended consequences for students or unfairly penalizing districts for dropout circumstances outside their control. The following categories of students are considered dropouts by NCES but excluded from the TEA dropout count: (1) students who were counted as a dropout in a previous school year, (2) students who withdrew to enroll in an approved adult education GED preparation program, (3) seniors who met all graduation requirements but did not pass the exit-level TAAS, (4) students enrolled but not eligible for state funding, and (5) students who were reported as a dropout from more than one district and it cannot be determined from the data which district they last attended. Including these five categories of students in the dropout count in 1998-99 would have increased the annual dropout rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.6*** percent.

  To encourage districts to recover students who have dropped out, TEA also excludes students who return to school anytime up to the January final PEIMS resubmission date. Adding students who are not enrolled on the October snapshot date the following year, as NCES does, would probably increase the dropout count significantly.

- **Missing In-State Transfers.** In 1998-99, there were 32,798 students reported as withdrawing to enroll in another Texas public school district for whom subsequent enrollment records were not found. Neither TEA nor NCES require districts to track students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere to confirm that they do re-enroll. It is not known how many of these students enrolled out of state or in private schools, were being home schooled, or whose records could not be matched across data collections. Designating these students as dropouts would have increased the annual dropout rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***3.4*** percent.

- **GED Recipients.** GED recipients are not considered dropouts under either the TEA or NCES dropout definition or under the definitions used by most other states. Including GED recipients in the dropout count in 1998-99 would have increased the annual rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.1*** percent..

Dropout Rate Calculation

- **Annual rate.** The annual dropout rate is low compared to other rates because it is a "snapshot" rate, measuring how many students drop out during one school year. Longitudinal rates, on the other hand, measure how many students drop out before they finish high school, covering the four or six years from the time they enter Grade 9 or 7. The Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate in 1998-99 was ***1.6*** percent, compared to a longitudinal dropout rate for those same grades of ***9.0*** percent.

- **Cumulative enrollment.** TEA uses cumulative enrollment in the dropout rate denominator rather than fall enrollment. Although this is the preferred enrollment count for calculating dropout rates, it can reduce the dropout rate by increasing the size of the denominator. Due to rounding, the 1998-99 dropout rate was ***1.6*** percent using either enrollment count.

Data Quality

- **Underreported students.** In 1998-99, there were 21,432 Grade 7-12 students for whom districts failed to submit a leaver or enrollment record. This undoubtedly includes many students whose records could not be matched to the prior-year record due to errors in student identifying information. Including these 21,432 students in the dropout count would have increased the dropout rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.8*** percent.

State Policy Overview

While taking steps to expand local authority for education programs, state lawmakers throughout the 1990s have demanded that districts and campuses be held accountable for student performance. The State Board of Education (SBOE), under direction from the legislature, adopted a set of student performance indicators in 1990 to help evaluate the quality and progress of education in Texas. Prominent among these was a dropout rate indicator.

Current Statutory Requirements

Although statute requires that the performance indicators include dropout rates (Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.051, 1999), it does not specify the type of dropout rate calculation. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has calculated an annual dropout rate for Grades 7-12 since 1987-88. An actual longitudinal dropout rate for Grades 7-12, which requires eight years of student-level enrollment and dropout data, was first calculated in 1997-98.

As a key component of the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), dropout rates play an important role in accountability ratings. The annual dropout rate for Grades 7-12 is a component of district and campus accountability ratings (TEC §39.072, 1999). AEIS data are also used to administer statutory reward programs (TEC §39.091, 1999) and to generate district and campus performance reports (TEC §39.053, 1999), as well as school report cards for distribution to parents (TEC §39.052, 1999).

In addition to the accountability ratings, TEA is required by statute to report dropout rates to the governor and legislature in the agency's *Comprehensive Biennial Report* (TEC §39.182) and *Interim Report* (TEC §39.185). This statute requires that the following types of dropout information be reported:

(1) dropout rates of students in Grades 7-12, expressed in the aggregate and by grade level;

(2) projected cross-sectional and longitudinal dropout rates for Grades 7-12 for the next five years, assuming no state action is taken to reduce the rates; and

(3) a description of a systematic plan for reducing the projected dropout rates to 5 percent or less.

Overview of TEA Dropout Data Processing

TEA introduced a major change in the dropout data submission requirements for school districts in 1998-99. Districts must now report the status of all students who were enrolled in Grades 7-12 in the district during the prior school year. Leaver data records submitted for students who left school during or after the 1998-99 school year, the most recent year for which data are available, are coded with up to three of 41 leaver reason codes. The leaver reason codes are categorized as graduates, dropouts, or other leavers. Students coded as other leavers were not reported prior to 1998-99.

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data are submitted to TEA through the regional Education Service Centers (ESCs), which are responsible for ensuring compliance with basic reporting requirements and schedules. Data checks are performed at TEA as part of initial data processing. Districts receive a list of potential underreported students – those prior-year Grade 7-12 students for whom the district has not submitted either an enrollment record (for re-enrolling students) or a leaver record (for graduates, dropouts, and other leavers). Districts

Performance Indicators and Accountability Systems

A decade of research on education indicators and indicator systems has established some basic requirements for a statistic, like a dropout rate, to be included in an effective indicator system. First and foremost, a performance indicator must generally be viewed as a measure of student success in school. It must also be valid – the type of measure that shows real change and that is not easily subject to distortion. A dropout rate should be valid in two ways. First, its assumptions and definitions should conform to an understandable, reasonable notion of who is and who is not a dropout. Second, it should be valid in that it should accurately reflect the true numbers of dropouts around the state. Because Texas uses the dropout rate as part of an accountability system, two additional demands are placed on it: fairness to districts and impact on students. Developing a sound accountability system requires finding the correct balance between two competing demands – validity of the indicator versus fairness of the indicator system and impact of the system on district behavior toward students.

Many of the issues being discussed in relation to the dropout rate parallel concerns about the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) performance indicator in the accountability rating system, particularly the concern that districts can compromise the validity of the TAAS. In response, two sets of TAAS results are released each year – results for all students that focus on state performance and performance trends and TAAS results used for accountability purposes. A data quality indicator – percent of students exempt from each test – is published for each school district. Safeguards have also been put in place to protect the validity of the TAAS performance indicator and the integrity of the accountability system. Discrepancies in data for a district can trigger a data investigation, which can result in assignment of a data quality rating or lowering of a rating.

have one opportunity to correct and resubmit their data before the resubmission deadline. The due date for the fall data submission that includes the leaver data is early December. The resubmission deadline is mid-January.

After TEA receives the final PEIMS data submission, an automated statewide search of other data files is conducted to determine if any students reported as dropouts appear elsewhere as non-dropouts. This includes students who are found enrolled in public school somewhere else in the state, students appearing on the General Educational Development (GED) information file as having received a GED certificate, students reported as graduated, and any students who have been identified as a dropout in previous school years. In 1998-99, the process identified 9,189 reported dropouts whose circumstances did not qualify them as dropouts for accountability purposes.

Once this process is completed, TEA calculates the annual dropout rate for each campus and district with Grade 7-12 enrollment, for all students and for each student group (African American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged). These rates, together with Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) scores and attendance rates, serve as academic excellence indicators and are used to determine for each district and campus an accountability rating of either *Exemplary*, *Recognized*, *Academically Acceptable/Acceptable*, or *Academically Unacceptable/Low-performing*. The agency also calculates longitudinal dropout and completion rates to meet legislative reporting requirements and public information needs.

Following release of the ratings each year, the commissioner of education convenes an accountability advisory group of educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to review issues that arose during the current year rating cycle and

changes proposed for the following year. As the need arises, focus groups of educators are appointed to study issues and bring recommendations to the advisory group. Changes to the dropout definition and calculation of the annual dropout rate, as well as leaver data quality issues that have arisen since the inception of the accountability system, have been reviewed by the accountability advisory group. The accountability dropout definition and use of a completion rate in the accountability rating system will be among the topics addressed by a focus group that will be appointed in the summer of 2001 to study issues related to the dropout indicator.

State Policy History

The Texas Legislature in 1984 passed House Bill (HB) 72, which mandated sweeping reforms in the state's public education system, including several aspects of the dropout issue. It authorized TEA to implement a system for collecting data on student dropouts and to begin developing a program to reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to no more than 5 percent (TEC §11.205, 1986). The bill directed the Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA) to assess the state's dropout problem and its effect on the Texas economy. Under contract with TDCA, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted much of the research, known as the Texas School Dropout Survey Project. In a report to the 69th Legislature, IDRA estimated that one third of Texas students drop out before completing high school. The reasons most frequently cited by students for leaving school included failing grades, excessive absences, marriage/pregnancy, and financial difficulties at home. Few Texas school districts reported having dropout prevention programs at the time, and fewer had evaluation data for those programs.

In 1987, the legislature passed HB 1010, which substantially increased state and local responsibilities for collecting student dropout information, monitoring dropout rates, and providing dropout reduction services (TEC §§11.205-11.207, 1988). TEA was required to establish a statewide dropout information clearinghouse and to form an interagency council to coordinate policies and resources for dropouts and at-risk students. The definition of a dropout was added to the dropout statute. In addition, the agency was directed to produce biennial reports for the legislature presenting a broad range of statewide dropout statistics and a systematic plan to reduce dropout rates for all segments of the student population. HB 1010 also required school districts to designate one or more at-risk coordinators and to provide remedial and support programs for students at risk of dropping out of school.

In conjunction with these legislative initiatives, the SBOE amended 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §75.195, Alternatives to Social Promotion, to require that districts adopt policies outlining academic options available to students at risk of dropping out. Also in 1987, the SBOE adopted the first long-range plan for Texas public school education. The plan called for establishing programs to reduce the dropout rate and encourage higher attendance. Dropout reduction has been a component of each subsequent long-range plan adopted by the SBOE.

In 1989, the 71st Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 152. It directed the SBOE to set an annual dropout rate target for Texas that would reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to 5 percent or less (a goal first established under HB 72) by 1997-98. Districts that had 100 or more students drop out the previous year, and those in which 5 percent or more of the students were identified as being at risk, were required to prepare a dropout reduction plan. Each year, any school district exceeding the state dropout rate target would be required to allocate a percentage of the district's compensatory education funds to remedial and support programs for at-risk students the following year. Since 1995, local dropout reduction efforts have been included in district and campus improvement plans (TEC §§11.252-11.253, 1999).

With readoption of the TEC in 1995 (SB 1), the statutory definition of a dropout was eliminated. SBOE authority to promulgate rules regarding at-risk classification and dropouts was also repealed. The SBOE subsequently repealed the dropout definition from the TAC. Currently, school districts must look exclusively to statutory criteria when reporting numbers of students identified as at risk through PEIMS. The *PEIMS Data Standards* continue to provide the operational definition of a dropout.

Concerns among legislators, school administrators, and the public about the definition of "dropouts" employed in the accountability system, the method of calculating dropout rates, and the accuracy of dropout data reported by school districts led the legislature in 1999 to request a study that focused on the collection of dropout data and the reporting of dropout statistics calculated from those data. TEA Rider 71 of the General Appropriations Act required the Legislative Budget Board (LBB), State Auditor's Office (SAO), and TEA to collaborate on a dropout study. Independently, the Senate Education Committee included a dropout study among its interim charges.

This report and its recommendations address these three areas:

Dropout definition – excluding categories of school leavers from the dropout count for accountability purposes who, it is argued, would typically be considered dropouts.

Dropout rate calculation – use of an annual dropout rate, which produces the lowest dropout rate of any method.

Data quality – possible underreporting of dropouts by school districts.

Dropout Definition

The current TEA definition of a dropout grew out of the accountability system used to rate the performance of districts and campuses. Consequently, the definition excludes students, some of whom would be considered dropouts under most dropout definitions. Some groups of school leavers are excluded from the dropout count to avoid unfairly penalizing districts for dropout circumstances outside their control. For example, due to the difficulty of tracking students who have left the country, students who withdraw from school to return to their home country are not counted as dropouts, even if they do not indicate an intent to re-enroll in school. To count these students as dropouts would inflate the dropout rates of certain districts, especially those along the Texas/Mexico border, that have a disproportionate number of foreign students.

Others are excluded to avoid unintended negative consequences for students. For example, repeat dropouts (students who were counted as dropouts in a previous year, return to school, then drop out again) are removed from the official dropout count. Because students who drop out once but return to school are more likely to drop out again, including repeat dropouts in the count may unintentionally discourage districts from aggressively trying to recover these students.

These factors result in lower dropout rates with any type of calculation, whether it be annual or longitudinal. The table on pages 16-17 lists each group of students excluded from the dropout count under the current accountability definition and the rationale for not counting those students as dropouts. The following section, and the table on page 12, describe the evolution of the current dropout definition.

History of TEA Definition. A dropout was defined in law in 1987 as a student in Grades 7-12 who does not hold a high school diploma or the equivalent and who is absent from school for 30 or more consecutive days with no evidence of being enrolled in another public or private school (TEC §11.205, 1988). As implemented by the SBOE, students with an approved excuse were excluded from the dropout definition, as were students who returned to school the following semester or school year (19 TAC §61.64, 1988). This definition is operationalized in the *PEIMS Data Standards*. The first PEIMS dropout records were submitted for students dropping out during the 1987-88 school year.

The original dropout definition in the *1988-89 PEIMS Data Standards* did not count as dropouts students who received a GED certificate because the GED testing program was developed as a means of objectively certifying whether an individual had equivalent educational development to that of a high school graduate. Students who transferred to other educational settings leading to a high school diploma, GED certificate, or college degree were also excluded. Students who withdrew to enter health care facilities and those incarcerated in correctional facilities were also not included in the dropout definition.

Beginning with the 1992-93 dropout rate, TEA searched dropout data for prior years to identify previously reported dropouts. These repeat dropouts were removed from the dropout count for the current year. Also beginning in 1992-93, students expelled for committing certain types of criminal behavior on school property or at school-related events were removed from the dropout count if the term of expulsion had not expired. In 1999, SB 103 amended the accountability statute to exclude all expelled students from the dropout count during the term of expulsion.

Legislative direction given at the time the revised TEC was adopted in 1995 indicated that, in deleting the dropout definition from code, it was intended that students who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level TAAS not be counted as dropouts. Also beginning that year, students who withdraw from school to return to their home countries are not counted as dropouts, even if the district does not have evidence that the students have re-enrolled in school.

Chronology of TEA Dropout Definition and Data Processing Enhancements

Year	Dropout Definition	Data Processing
1987-88	Dropout defined in TEC, TAC, and *PEIMS Data Standards* as a student in Grades 7-12 who does not hold a high school diploma or the equivalent and is absent from school for 30 or more consecutive days. Students with approved excuse or documented transfer are excluded from the dropout definition, as are students who return to school the following semester or year.	TEA begins collecting individual student-level records for students who drop out of school.
1990-91		TEA begins collecting individual student-level enrollment records and graduate records. Automated search of enrollment records instituted, and reported dropouts found to be enrolled in another Texas public school district the following year are removed from the dropout count.
1992-93	Students previously counted as a dropout, back to 1990-91, are removed from the dropout count. Students expelled for committing certain types of criminal behavior on school property or at school-related events are removed from the dropout count during the term of expulsion.	TEA begins collecting individual student level attendance records. Automated search of attendance records instituted and reported dropouts found to be in attendance in another Texas public school district later in the year removed from the dropout count. Automated search of graduate records and GED certificate records instituted and reported dropouts found to have graduated or received a GED removed from the dropout count.
1994-95	Dropout definition is removed from state law and SBOE rule. Students who meet all graduation requirements but fail the exit-level TAAS are removed from the dropout count. Students who return to their home countries are excluded from the dropout count even if there is no evidence that they have re-enrolled in school.	
1995-96	Students who enroll in alternative programs that are not state approved but that meet certain criteria are removed from the dropout count.	
1997-98		TEA begins collecting individual student-level records for all school leavers — graduates, dropouts, and students who left school for other reasons. Additional audits of dropout rates calculated from these data are conducted at the state level.
1998-99		Automated search of enrollment records expanded to include students who return to school in the fall but leave before the PEIMS snapshot date or do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date.
1999-00	Sixteen-year-olds enrolled in Job Corps programs leading to a high school equivalency certificate are removed from the dropout count. Circumstances under which expelled students are excluded from the dropout count are expanded in statute to cover students expelled for any reason.	

When the age of compulsory attendance was raised from 16 to 17 in 1989, an exemption was added for students who are at least 17 years old and enrolled in a GED preparation program. In 1999, SB 1472 added an exemption for students who are at least 16 and enrolled in Job Corps programs.

Data Processing Refinements. Dropout records were the first individual student data records submitted as part of the PEIMS data collection system, initiated in 1987-88. In 1990-91 districts also began submitting individual student enrollment records. This allowed TEA to conduct an automated statewide search to determine if any students reported as a dropout were enrolled in other school districts in the state. In 1992-93 similar searches of graduate records and GED certificate records were also instituted. Although this effort does not constitute a change in the definition of a dropout, it does result in removing students from the dropout count who were incorrectly reported as dropouts by districts that were not aware the students had re-enrolled elsewhere.

In 1998, the PEIMS dropout and graduate data records were eliminated and replaced with a leaver data record. School districts are now required to submit a record for each school leaver, not just dropouts and graduates. The 1997-98 dropout rate was calculated using the new leaver data. In 1998-99, the automated search of enrollment records was expanded to include students who return to school in the fall but leave before the PEIMS snapshot date or do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date.

NCES. The United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects a standard set of data from every state annually. Since 1991-92, NCES has been collecting data to report an annual dropout rate for those states that meet NCES requirements for data quality and comparability. Changes to the NCES dropout definition since 1991-92 have brought it closer to the TEA definition, although there are still differences. The table on page 14 compares the dropout definitions used by TEA and NCES. There are five groups of students not counted as dropouts by TEA that are counted as dropouts by NCES: (1) students previously counted as a dropout, (2) students withdrawing to enroll in an approved adult education GED preparation program, (3) seniors who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level TAAS, (4) students enrolled but not eligible for state Foundation School Program funding, and (5) students reported as a dropout by more than one district and it cannot be determined from the data which district they were enrolled in last. TEA includes these students in the dropout counts reported to NCES. Exhibit 2 shows the differences in the dropout counts with these groups of students included.

Exhibit 2

TEA and NCES Dropout Counts for Texas Public Schools Grades 7-12 — 1998-99

	TEA	NCES
State	27,592	46,554
African American	5,682	9,743
Asian/Pacific Islander	424	670
Hispanic	14,413	23,768
Native American	67	140
White	7,006	12,233

Source: TEA PEIMS, 1999-2000.

NOTE: Dropout counts for NCES do not include either the adjustment for summer dropout reporting or recaptures (returning students who are not enrolled on the fall PEIMS snapshot date).

The dropout data TEA reports to NCES do not meet the NCES requirements for counting recaptures and summer dropouts. Recaptures are those students who drop out before the end of

Comparison of TEA and NCES Dropout Definitions
1998-99 School Year

<table>
<tr><th>TEA</th><th>NCES</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Definition.
TEA and NCES both define a dropout as a student who is enrolled in school at some time during the school year but either (1) leaves school during the school year without an approved excuse or documentation of having transferred to another school or (2) completes the school year but does not return the following year as expected.
The following students are considered dropouts under both definitions.
Students who leave school for academic reasons, such as poor attendance or failing grades.
Students who leave school for job-related reasons, such as pursuing a job or joining the military.
Students who leave school because of family-related concerns, such as pregnancy or marriage.
Students who leave school because of homelessness and migrant students whose whereabouts are unknown.
Students who leave school and enter a program not qualifying as an elementary/secondary school.
Students who leave school and whose whereabouts are unknown.
The following students are not considered dropouts under either definition.
Students who transfer to another public or private school, are being home-schooled, or enroll in college early.
Students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere.
Foreign students returning to their home country.
Migrant students for whom a subsequent school enrollment record is available.
Students who graduate or receive a GED certificate.
Students who die.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Students not counted as a dropout.
Students who were counted as a dropout in a previous school year.
Students who withdraw to enroll in an approved adult education GED preparation program.
Seniors who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level TAAS.
Students enrolled but not eligible for state funding.
Students who are reported as a dropout by more than one district and it cannot be determined from the data which district they last attended.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Grades covered. Grades 7-12.</td><td>Grades covered. Grades 9-12.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Summer dropouts.
Students who complete the school year but do not return the following year as expected are counted as dropouts from the grade and school year completed.</td><td>Summer dropouts.
Students who complete the school year but do not return the following year as expected are counted as dropouts from the grade and school year for which they fail to enroll.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Recaptures.
Students who leave during the school year but return by the January PEIMS resubmission date the following school year are not considered dropouts.
Students who receive a GED certificate by March 1 of the following school year are not considered dropouts.</td><td>Recaptures.
Students who leave during the school year but are enrolled on the October PEIMS snapshot date the following school year are not considered dropouts.
Students who receive a GED certificate by the October PEIMS snapshot date the following school year are not considered dropouts.</td></tr>
</table>

the school year but return to school the following fall. Under the NCES definition, dropouts are removed from the dropout count if they return to school the following year and are enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date. (PEIMS data submitted in the fall represent a snapshot of the district on a selected date, usually the last Friday in October.) Under the TEA definition, dropouts are removed from the count if they return anytime before the January resubmission date. Recaptures who must be added back to the NCES dropout count include students who return to school but leave again before the PEIMS snapshot date and students who do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date. It is estimated that adding recaptures could increase the dropout count significantly. Changing the year and grade for which summer dropouts are reported, as required under the NCES definition, would probably have a negligible effect on the state dropout count.

Under the current leaver reporting system, leaver records are not submitted for students who return to school after the summer break. To include recaptures in the NCES dropout count, districts would be required to submit leaver data to TEA for students who return but are not enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date the following school year. It is estimated that this could mean reporting data on an additional 15,000 to 90,000 students, depending on how the *PEIMS Data Standards* are modified. Clearly, this change would impose an additional data reporting burden on school districts. To minimize as much as possible any additional data reporting burden for school districts, significant changes to the PEIMS data submission requirements must be reviewed and approved by the Policy Committee on Public Education Information (PCPEI). The PCPEI, a commissioner's policy advisory group formed in 1991 to address issues related to the PEIMS data collection, is composed of representatives of school districts, ESCs , state government (LBB, SAO, TEA, Governor's Office, Senate Education Committee, House Public Education Committee, and Comptroller's Office), and education associations. Involvement of PCPEI also helps ensure that adequate lead time is available to school districts to make the required modifications to data systems to comply with data collection and reporting changes.

Although NCES requires states to submit dropout counts for Grades 7-12, the annual dropout rate they publish is a Grade 9-12 rate. The calculation also differs from the TEA methodology. NCES uses fall enrollment (a count of students enrolled on the fall PEIMS snapshot date) in the denominator rather than cumulative enrollment (a count of students enrolled at any time during the school year) because few states can report cumulative enrollment.

Recommendation

1. ***Report the NCES Dropout Rate.*** In addition to current dropout reporting, report annual dropout rates for the state and school districts under the NCES dropout definition.

   The NCES dropout definition is a nationally accepted definition and produces rates that can be compared to other states. It includes many categories of school leavers that have been removed from the TEA dropout definition for accountability evaluation purposes. TEA would report the NCES rate to provide an independent assessment of Texas' progress on dropouts compared to other states, but still retain a separate set of district and campus dropout indicators for use in the accountability system. TEA should work with PCPEI to develop a proposal to the commissioner for collecting the data needed to comply with the NCES definition.

Leavers Not Counted as Dropouts

Reason for leaving:	*Rationale for not counting student as dropout:*
Completed High School Program	
Students who graduate.	Students who have graduated should not be considered dropouts for accountability purposes, even if they later return to school to make up some deficiency.
Students who earn a GED certificate.	The GED testing program was originally developed as a means of objectively certifying whether an individual had equivalent educational development to that of a high school graduate. Legislation was implemented nine years ago to permit students who were still enrolled in public school, but who were seriously credit deficient, to earn GED certificates. In light of this legislative decision, it seemed consistent to continue to count GED recipients as completers rather than dropouts after the dropout definition was removed from statute.
Seniors who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level TAAS.	These are students who have completed all coursework requirements for a diploma. Under the definition in law before the rewrite of the Texas Education Code, they were counted as dropouts. Legislative direction given at the time the TEC was rewritten indicated that, in deleting the dropout definition from code, it was intended that these students not be counted as dropouts. They are not counted as completers/continuing students under the TEA completion rate definition unless they are still enrolled in school.
Moved to Other Educational Setting	
Students who withdraw to enter college early.	These are students who are actively pursuing higher education by enrolling in a specific degree plan. The *PEIMS Data Standards* are very specific in requiring the reporting districts to have documentation of enrollment in pursuit of an Associate's or Bachelor's degree (simply picking up a class at the community college would not permit a district to use this leaver reason code). Because the student's education has neither ceased nor been interrupted, it is inappropriate to count the student as a dropout.
Students whose enrollment in another Texas public school is documented, or for whom the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in public school outside the state or in private school.	Students who have left the district but are known to be pursuing their schooling are not counted as dropouts.
Students who withdraw with intent to enroll in school outside Texas or in private school.	These are students for whom the district has documentation that they would be enrolling in school outside Texas or in a private school, but for whom a transcript request has not been received. Because the parents maintain authority over the children's education, the students are not counted as dropouts.
Students who withdraw with intent to enroll in another Texas public school district.	These are students for whom the district has documentation that they would be enrolling in another Texas public school district, but for whom a transcript request has not been received. Because the parents maintain authority over the children's education, the students are not counted as dropouts. With the new leaver data collection, audits can be conducted to determine if the students did enroll in other districts.
Students who withdraw to enroll in approved alternative programs.	These are students for whom the district has documentation that they would be attending an alternative program. The students are in compliance with compulsory attendance laws (at least 17 years old, or 16 years old for Job Corps programs) and are continuing to work towards completion of either a high school diploma or a GED certificate. Therefore, they are not counted as dropouts.
Students under the age of compulsory attendance withdrawn from school by court order.	These students are court-ordered to attend a specific alternative program. The district does not have the authority to override such actions by the court; therefore, the students are not counted as dropouts. The district must have a copy of the court order on file.

for Accountability Purposes by TEA

Reason for leaving:	*Rationale for not counting student as dropout:*
Students who withdraw to begin home schooling.	This is also a situation in which the parents (or legal guardians) maintain authority over the children's education. Further, the students are identified to the school district as continuing a course of study without interruption. Consequently, the students are not counted as dropouts.
Withdrawn by District	
Students expelled.	The TEC §37.007 defines circumstances in which districts are required or permitted to expel students and TEC §39.051 excludes these students from the dropout count. Expelled students are not counted as dropouts during the term of expulsion. Also, those students whose adjudication indicates need for supervision and those convicted and sentenced are excluded from the dropout count.
Students who were administratively withdrawn when it was discovered that they were not residents or had falsified enrollment information.	The district was not obligated to enroll these students in the first place. Therefore, the students' withdrawal is an administrative correction and the district is not held accountable for them as dropouts.
Students withdrawn from school after failing to provide immunization records.	With few exceptions, students enrolling in Texas public schools must be immunized against specified contagious diseases. Under Texas Department of Health rules, districts must provisionally admit students who have begun the required immunizations but may withdraw those who do not complete the immunizations within 30 days. The students are not voluntarily dropping out; therefore, they are not counted as such.
Other Reasons	
Students who are in the protective custody of Child Protective Services and have been forcibly removed by CPS, and the district has not been advised of the students' whereabouts.	This is an extreme situation in which an intervention was made to protect a child's safety. The district does not have the authority to override such actions by CPS and cannot be held accountable for the child as a dropout.
Students who withdraw to enter health care facilities.	The assumption here is that the student's health was such that he or she was unable to remain in school. Students who enter health care facilities in Texas are provided education services by the facility or the district in which the facility is located, unless they are physically unable to continue secondary study. As such, the departure from school is not considered a voluntary interruption that the school could be expected to prevent or correct. Therefore, the students are not counted as dropouts for accountability purposes.
Students who have been incarcerated in facilities outside the boundaries of the school district.	These students become the responsibility of the district where the facility is located, which is obligated to see that educational services are made available. Hence, the students are more appropriately considered as transfers out of the district and are not counted as dropouts.
Students who withdraw from school to return to their home countries.	Due to the difficulty in tracking students who have left the country, districts are not required to confirm that these students have re-enrolled in school in order not to have them counted as dropouts. Districts must have documentation that the students are leaving or have left the country.
Students who had previously been counted as an official dropout in any year going back to 1991.	Research literature, as confirmed by input from educators participating in the commissioner's accountability focus groups, indicates that students who drop out but return to school are far more likely than their continuously enrolled peers to drop out again. To fully support districts in their efforts to recover students who have dropped out, repeat dropouts are only counted once as official dropouts.
Students who are deceased.	Self-explanatory.

Dropout Rate Calculation

Critics of the dropout rate calculation used by TEA in the accountability system question the ability of an annual indicator to accurately portray the success or failure of districts and campuses to keep students in school until they complete their high school education. The annual dropout rate is low compared to other measures. Policymakers are currently exploring the use of an alternative measure of student performance, such as a longitudinal school completion rate. Some feel that tracking a class of students through their high school careers, rather than relying on a single-year snapshot of all students in Grades 7-12, may be a more direct and understandable way of assessing the effectiveness of Texas public schools.

There is also considerable confusion among educators, policymakers, and the public about how to interpret the proliferation of dropout data now available. Distinctions between concepts such as annual versus longitudinal and actual versus estimated are not always clear. The table on page 20 compares the most common methods of calculating dropout rates, some advantages and disadvantages, and the rates they produce for the 1998-99 school year. Descriptions of the different methods follow.

Annual Dropout Rate

The annual dropout rate measures the percentage of students who drop out of school during one school year.

Calculation. An annual dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who drop out during a school year by the total number of students enrolled that same year. Annual dropout rates reported by different organizations may differ because (1) different grade levels are included in the calculation, (2) dropouts are defined and counted differently, (3) total enrollment counts are taken at different times of the school year, or (4) the data systems employed provide different levels of precision.

Advantages. An annual dropout rate measures what happens in a school, district, or state during one school year and can be considered a measure of annual performance. Because it is based on a simple mathematical operation and requires data for only one school year, it has the greatest potential to produce accurate rates that are comparable across schools, districts, or states. It can be calculated for any school that has students in any of the grades included in the calculation, allowing the largest number of campuses to be included in an accountability system.

Annual dropout rates can also be calculated for student groups based on demographic characteristics (ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age), special program participation (special education, bilingual/English as a second language, career and technology), or other educational factors (grade level, at risk, overage for grade). This makes an annual dropout rate a practical tool to help educators determine who is dropping out and why – essential information for developing and evaluating dropout prevention and recovery programs.

Disadvantages. Because an annual dropout rate uses data for only one year, it produces the lowest dropout rate of any of the methods. There is concern that reporting low dropout rates may understate the severity of the dropout problem. This concern is based in part on the perception that an annual dropout rate is not consistent with the public's understanding of what a dropout rate is measuring.

Common Methods of Measuring School Dropouts

	Annual Dropout Rate	Completion/ Student Status Rate	Longitudinal Dropout Rate	Attrition Rate
Description	Measures the percentage of students who drop out of school during one school year.	Measures the percentage of students from a class of 7th or 9th graders who graduate, receive a GED, or are still enrolled at the time their class graduates.	Measures the percentage of students from a class of 7th or 9th graders who drop out before completing high school.	Estimates the percentage of students from a class of 9th graders not enrolled in Grade 12 four years later for whatever reason.
Calculation	Divide the number of students who drop out during a school year by the total number of students enrolled that year.	Divide the number of students who drop out by the end of Grade 12, or the number who complete school, by the total number of students in the original 7th or 9th grade class. Students who transfer in over the years are added to the class; students who transfer out are subtracted.		Subtract Grade 12 enrollment from Grade 9 enrollment four years earlier, then divide by the Grade 9 enrollment. The rate may be adjusted for estimated population change over the four years.
Advantages	• Measure of annual performance • Requires only one year of data • Can be calculated for any school/district with students in any of the grades covered • Can be disaggregated by grade level	• More consistent with the public's understanding of a dropout rate • Districts have more time to encourage dropouts to return to school before being held accountable • More stable measure over time • The completion/student status rate is a more positive indicator than the dropout rate, measuring school success rather than failure		• Provides a simple measure of school leavers when aggregate enrollment numbers are the only data available
Disadvantages	• Produces the lowest rate of any method • May not correspond to the public's understanding of a dropout rate	• Requires multiple years of data; one year of bad data can remove a student from the measure • Program improvements may not be reflected for several years, and districts are not held accountable for some dropouts until years after they drop out • Can only be calculated for schools or districts that have all the grades in the calculation, and have had all those grades for the number of years necessary to calculate the rate — since few high schools have Grades 7 and 8, longitudinal dropout and completion rates are often calculated for Grades 9-12 • Does not produce a dropout rate by grade		• Produces the highest rate of any method • Does not distinguish attrition resulting from dropping out from that resulting from grade-level retentions, transfers to other schools, death, early graduates, etc. • Does not always correctly reflect the status of dropouts; adjustments for growth can further distort the rate • Cannot be used in accountability systems because it is an estimate
Remarks	A Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate has been calculated by TEA since 1987-88. This is the rate used in the accountability system.	The methodology used to calculate the 1998-99 completion/student status rate was revised so that the longitudinal dropout rate and completion/student status rate add to 100%.	TEA began calculating an actual Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rate with the 1997-98 school year.	The attrition rate reported by TEA is not adjusted for growth.
TEA 1998-99	Annual dropout rate: Grades 7-12 **1.6%** Grades 9-12 **2.2%**	Completion/ student status rate: Grades 7-12 **91.0%** Grades 9-12 **91.5%**	Longitudinal dropout rate: Grades 7-12 **9.0%** Grades 9-12 **8.5%**	Unadjusted attrition rate: Grades 7-12 **25.8%** Grades 9-12 **36.6%**

TEA Reporting. An annual dropout rate was first calculated by TEA in 1987-88 as the number of dropouts from Grades 7-12, based on the definition described previously, divided by the total number of students enrolled in Grades 7-12 the fall of that same year. The same calculation was used for the first five years of dropout reporting.

In 1992-93, districts began submitting individual student attendance records as part of the PEIMS data collection. For the first time, TEA was able to compute cumulative enrollment – the number of students in attendance in Grades 7-12 at any time during the previous school year. Cumulative enrollment more closely parallels the required reporting of dropouts, which covers students who drop out at any time during the school year and includes students who enroll after the fall enrollment count. Cumulative enrollment also provides the most consistent data for comparisons of dropout rates between districts and campuses with different mobility rates. For these reasons, cumulative enrollment replaced fall enrollment in the dropout rate calculation. This is the only change that has been made to the calculation during the 12 years the annual dropout rate has been reported by TEA.

Exhibit 3 shows TEA 1998-99 annual dropout rates by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In 1998-99, 1.6 percent of students in Grades 7-12 dropped out of school. (Historical annual dropout rates back to 1987-88 are presented in Appendix C.) An annual dropout rate for Grades 9-12 was also calculated for 1998-99 dropouts. The statewide Grade 9-12 dropout rate was 2.2 percent.

Exhibit 3
Texas Education Agency
Annual Dropout Rate for Texas Public Schools
1998-99

	Grades 7-12	Grades 9-12
State	1.6%	2.2%
African American	2.3%	3.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.9%	1.2%
Hispanic	2.3%	3.1%
Native American	1.3%	1.7%
White	0.8%	1.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	1.5%	2.3%

Source: TEA PEIMS, 1998-99, 1999-2000.

Longitudinal Completion and Dropout Rates

A completion rate measures the percentage of students from a class of 9th graders or 7th graders who complete their high school education by their expected graduation date. A longitudinal dropout rate measures the percentage of students from the same class who drop out before completing their high school education.

Calculation. Calculating longitudinal rates requires tracking a class of students over five to seven years, from the time they enter Grade 9 or Grade 7 until the fall following their expected graduation date. The completion rate is the number of students who graduate or receive a GED certificate, divided by the total number of students in the original class. The rate may also include the status of students who remain in school after their class graduates. The longitudinal dropout rate is the number of students who drop out divided by the total number of students in the original class. Students who transfer in over the years are added to the original class as it progresses through the grade levels; students who transfer out are subtracted from the class.

Longitudinal rates reported by different organizations may differ because they use (1) different starting grades in the calculation (typically Grade 9 or Grade 7), (2) different definitions of a school completer or dropout, or more likely, (3) different underlying methods to calculate the

rates. Few organizations have the data and computer capacity to track individual students over a number of years, so longitudinal rates are often estimated based on state-level data or sample data from surveys.

Advantages. One advantage of a longitudinal measure is that it is more consistent with the public's understanding of what a school completer or dropout is – someone who enters Grade 9 or Grade 7 and, during the next five or seven years, either completes high school or a GED, remains enrolled, or drops out. Also, districts have more time to encourage dropouts to return to school before being held accountable for those students. Because the status of a student is not determined until the fall after the expected graduation date, districts have up to five or seven years to bring dropouts back to school. A longitudinal measure can also be expected to be more stable over time than an annual measure. Fluctuations in an annual dropout rate may not necessarily reflect the long-term success or failure of the district's dropout prevention program.

The completion rate is more positive than the dropout rate, measuring school success instead of failure. Like most indicators of school success, an increase in the completion rate represents improved performance. Because separate rates can be reported for different ways to complete school, such as graduating and receiving a GED certificate, completion rates can provide more information with which to evaluate districts than the dropout rate

Disadvantages. Calculating a longitudinal rate requires linking individual student records from multiple sources across five or seven years. An error in basic identifying information can prevent linking one record to others for the student. The method also requires that decisions be made about how to classify students who change schools and move in and out of special programs over time. Changes in data collection practices and in the dropout definition over time must also be incorporated into the methodology.

Continuing students who drop out after their expected graduation date are never counted as dropouts under a longitudinal methodology. Tracking students for an additional year would undoubtedly result in changes in both directions – dropouts returning to school or receiving GED certificates and continuing students dropping out before they graduate.

Longitudinal rates can only be calculated for schools or districts that have all the grade levels included in the rate, and have had all those grades for the number of years necessary to calculate the rate. Since few high schools include Grades 7 and 8, high school completion rates are calculated for a class of Grade 9 students rather than a class of Grade 7 students.

The longitudinal methodology does not produce a dropout rate by grade. The completion rates and longitudinal dropout rates for special programs will reflect decisions about how to classify students who move in and out of those programs. For example, the longitudinal dropout rate for special education students may include only those students who were receiving special education services the year they dropped out.

Improvements in dropout prevention programs may not be reflected in a longitudinal dropout rate immediately because the rate is based on the final status of a single class rather than all grades in the school. At the same time, many dropouts are not included in a longitudinal dropout rate until several years after they drop out. This means districts may be held accountable in one year for students who dropped out several years earlier.

TEA Reporting. Due to interest on the part of educators and policymakers in a longitudinal completion rate, TEA has calculated actual completion/student status rates for six classes of 9th

grade students, the graduating classes of 1994 through 1999. The methodology used to calculate the 1998-99 completion rate was revised so that the completion/student status rate and longitudinal dropout rate add to 100 percent. The completion/student status rate includes three components: graduates, GED recipients, and continuing students. The longitudinal dropout rate makes up a fourth component. The longitudinal rate is based on the same definition of dropouts used in the TEA annual dropout rate.

Exhibit 4
Texas Education Agency
Grade 9-12 Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates for Texas Public Schools — 1998-99

	Graduated	Received GED	Continuing Students	Dropped Out	Total Students
State	79.5%	4.0%	8.0%	8.5%	100.0%
African American	74.7%	3.1%	10.6%	11.6%	100.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	87.4%	2.2%	6.3%	4.2%	100.0%
Hispanic	70.6%	3.5%	12.8%	13.1%	100.0%
Native American	81.4%	5.2%	6.8%	6.6%	100.0%
White	86.2%	4.6%	4.2%	4.9%	100.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	71.3%	3.8%	11.8%	13.1%	100.0%

Source: TEA PEIMS, 1994-95 - 1999-2000.

The longitudinal rates for 1998-99 track students who began Grade 9 for the first time in 1995-96. Completion/student status and longitudinal dropout rates are reported in AEIS district reports and on the campus reports for high schools with continuous enrollment in Grades 9-12 for the preceding 4 years. The four separate rates are reported, as shown in Exhibit 4. About 79.5 percent of students in the class of 1999 graduated, 4.0 percent received a GED certificate, 8.0 percent were continuing in school after their class graduated, and 8.5 percent dropped out.

TEA calculated an actual Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rate for the first time in 1997-98. The longitudinal dropout rate for the class of 1998-99 tracks students who began Grade 7 in 1993-94. Exhibit 5 shows TEA 1998-99 actual Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rates by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. About 9.0 percent of students in the class of 1999 dropped out before completing high school. The longitudinal dropout rate for Grades 7-12 is higher than the rate for Grades 9-12 because it is based on one graduating class but includes students who dropped out of Grades 7 and 8 as well as those who dropped out of Grades 9-12. The combined completion/student status rate is also calculated for Grades 7-12. About 78.1

Exhibit 5
Texas Education Agency
Grade 7-12 Longitudinal Dropout Rate for Texas Public Schools
1998-99

State	9.0%
African American	11.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.6%
Hispanic	14.3%
Native American	8.3%
White	5.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	14.8%

Source: TEA PEIMS, 1993-94 - 1999-2000.

percent of the class of 1999 graduated, 3.9 percent received a GED certificate by the time their class graduated, and 8.9 percent were continuing in school after their class graduated.

Before 1997-98, TEA estimated longitudinal dropout rates because there were not enough years of PEIMS student-level data to calculate an actual longitudinal dropout rate. These estimated rates were based on state-level data for the most current year.

Projected Dropout Rates. In addition to the annual and longitudinal dropout rates for Grades 7-12 for the current year, TEA is required by statute to report projected dropout rates for the next five years, assuming no state action is taken to reduce the dropout rate. The projections reflect the assumptions underlying the projection methods used. The annual projections are based on dropout rates by grade and ethnicity for the current year. The ethnic compositions of Grades 7-12 are projected to change over the next five years. The longitudinal projections are based on dropout rates by ethnicity for the most recent graduating class. The ethnic compositions of Grade 7 cohorts are projected to change over the next five years. In both cases, the projected rates hold constant or rise very slightly.

Attrition Rate

An attrition rate estimates the percentage of students from a class of 9th graders not enrolled in Grade 12 four years later.

Calculation. The attrition rate is calculated by subtracting Grade 12 enrollment from Grade 9 enrollment four years earlier, and dividing by the Grade 9 enrollment.

Advantages. The attrition rate provides a simple measure of school leavers when aggregate enrollment numbers are the only data available.

Disadvantages. The attrition rate does not take into account any of the reasons that the beginning and ending enrollments are different. Therefore, there is no way to distinguish attrition resulting from dropping out from that resulting from grade-level retention, students transferring to private schools, death, or early graduation. For this reason, the attrition rate can fluctuate because of factors that are not considered a reflection of school performance, such as the student mobility rate, and factors Texas has chosen not to include as performance measures, such as retention rates. When used as a proxy for a longitudinal dropout rate, the attrition rate overstates the dropout problem.

Exhibit 6
Texas Education Agency
Grade 9-12 Unadjusted Attrition Rate
for Texas Public Schools
1998-99

State	36.6%
African American	43.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.0%
Hispanic	47.7%
Native American	-11.0%
White	26.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	55.5%

Source: TEA PEIMS, 1996-97, 1999-2000.

Furthermore, the attrition rate does not always correctly reflect the status of dropouts. The Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rate is higher than the Grade 9-12 longitudinal dropout rate because the Grade 7-12 rate includes students who dropped out of Grades 7-8 as well as students who dropped out of Grades 9-12. The opposite is true of the attrition rate. An attrition rate based on Grade 7 is lower than the Grade 9 attrition rate. Also, dropouts who return to school but must make up a grade continue to count as part of the attrition rate.

Differences in growth rates across grade levels and between schools and districts can distort the attrition rate, and the calculations sometimes include growth adjustments. However, the adjustments themselves may cause distortions. For a school or district that is not growing but has an effective dropout prevention program, a growth adjustment would inflate the attrition rate.

Finally, because the attrition rate is an estimate, it should not be used as a performance indicator in a high stakes accountability system.

TEA Reporting. TEA calculated a Grade 9-12 attrition rate for the class of 1999 by comparing 1998-99 Grade 12 enrollment to 1995-96 Grade 9 enrollment, without adjustments for growth. As Exhibit 6 shows, the attrition rate for the state was 36.6 percent.

Recommendations

2. ***Add a Grade 9-12 Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rate.*** Include Grade 9-12 longitudinal completion/student status rates among the performance indicators reported in the AEIS district and campus reports. Endorse the commissioner of education's plan to incorporate a longitudinal measure of completion/student status in district and campus accountability ratings.

   Underlying concern about dropouts is the desire that, after four years of high school, all students in Texas possess the skills needed to succeed in their future pursuits. How well Texas schools are accomplishing this goal is more directly measured by tracking a class of students through their high school careers, rather than relying on a single-year snapshot of all students in Grades 7-12. Commissioner of Education Jim Nelson has recommended that a high school (Grades 9-12) completion/student status rate replace or supplement the current annual dropout rate in the accountability rating system, starting in school year 2003-04. The redesigned accountability rating system incorporating the new TAAS testing program will be introduced that year. A commissioner's accountability focus group will develop a specific proposal for phase-in of this recommendation, including establishing definitions and standards.

3. ***Eliminate Projected Rates.*** Repeal statute requiring TEA to report projected rates. (TEC §39.182)

   The number of different dropout definitions and methods of calculating dropout rates have led to confusion about the meaning of the dropout rate as a measure of school performance. Projected dropout rates seem to have little practical value because they hold constant or fluctuate based on the assumptions in the projection methodology.

Data Quality

Data used to calculate dropout rates are self-reported by districts, unlike test results, which are reported directly to TEA by the testing companies. Given the high stakes associated with use of the dropout rate in the accountability system and the absence of a routine audit of every district's dropout data submission, concerns have arisen about the accuracy of the dropout data submitted by districts.

Responding to these concerns, TEA made a major change in the data submission requirements for school districts in 1998-99. Beginning in the fall of 1998, districts were required to report all prior-year Grade 7-12 students who left the district and provide the reason each student left. Leavers are categorized as graduates, dropouts, or other leavers. Students coded as other leavers were not reported prior to 1998-99. This more complete set of withdrawal information can be better monitored at the state level. For example, TEA can search enrollment records to determine if students reported as leaving with the intent to enroll in another Texas public school district actually enrolled elsewhere. District leaver reporting patterns can also be compared to other districts in the region and to prior-year reporting for the same district. TEA can identify districts that report many more students moving out of state than reported by neighboring districts, or that show a dramatic increase in students moving out of state.

PEIMS Resources. In addition, districts have been provided with a number of tools to assist them in reducing data errors before and during data submission. Published annually by TEA, the *PEIMS Data Standards* provide detailed reporting requirements and TEA contact information. Question and answer documents produced periodically are distributed to every school district and ESC and made available on the TEA website.

The leaver reason code table in the *1999-2000 PEIMS Data Standards* included 41 leaver reason codes to identify why students left school. (See Appendix A for the number of students reported under each leaver reason code.) The high number of calls received from district and ESC PEIMS coordinators during the 1999-2000 fall data submission period demonstrated that the leaver reason codes are not always clear. For this reason, an expanded leaver reason code table with a definition/clarification for each code was added to the *2000-01 PEIMS Data Standards* (See Appendix B). TEA is working with district and ESC PEIMS coordinators to identify problems with the leaver reason codes and documentation requirements. Work has begun on a revised leaver reason code table with fewer codes organized into broad categories. The earliest that districts could make the software changes needed to implement a new code table would be for the 2002-03 PEIMS data submission.

The *PEIMS Data Standards* require that districts have documentation to support the assigned leaver reason code. Questions about use of specific leaver reason codes are often related to questions about the documentation requirements for the code. A 1996 audit by the State Auditor's Office and TEA data investigations in 1999 found that districts often did not have sufficient documentation on the whereabouts of students who were not reported as dropouts. In some situations investigators found no documentation. In other situations, however, districts were not clear about the type of documentation required. To assist districts in meeting documentation requirements, specific documentation standards for each leaver reason code were prepared as an addendum to the *2000-01 PEIMS Data Standards* (See Appendix B).

PEIMS coordinators in each ESC serve as consultants to the school districts in preparing their data submissions, as well as providing training and technical assistance. At the request of ESC

PEIMS coordinators, TEA staff conduct workshops for district and ESC staff who work with the PEIMS data. A training-of-trainers format is used to assist participants in further disseminating the information. Workshops are also conducted through the Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN) videoconferencing network, reaching a broader audience and allowing interactions between staff from the different ESC regions. Twice a year one or two-day PEIMS coordinator training sessions are held in Austin to review changes to the *PEIMS Data Standards*.

A Person Identification Database (PID) error rate policy being phased in over six years beginning in 2000-01 will require that the student identifying information provided to TEA as part of each district's PEIMS data submissions meet a standard for accuracy. The PID system is used by TEA to manage and store identifying information on students reported to TEA through PEIMS. The purpose of the PID system is to ensure that each time data are collected for the same individual, certain pieces of basic identifying information match. The PID system used at TEA verifies that social security number (or alternative ID), last name, first name, and date of birth match on every record submitted for an individual. Although the overall PID error rate for the state has declined with each data submission since student enrollment data were first collected in 1990-91, PID errors continue to plague efforts to link data across two or more data submissions. PID errors do not affect the calculation of the annual dropout rate. However, the introduction of longitudinal performance measures of school completers and school leavers requires linking many years of data. In addition, with increased reliance on desk audits of district leaver data submissions that require linking to prior-year data, accuracy of the PID information has become more critical. Inaccurate student identifying information is also at the heart of the problem of reported students appearing on district lists of underreported students. Student data submitted in 2005-06 must have 10 or fewer student records with PID errors or a PID error rate of 1.0 percent or lower.

Edit software made available to districts shortly after the beginning of each school year allows them to identify potential data problems and correct data errors before the data submission is due. In 1999-2000, TEA introduced a web-based enhancement that gives districts more lead time to correct PID errors in leaver records before submitting their PEIMS data to TEA.

The PEIMS web page (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/peims/) also provides on-line access to general information about PEIMS, the *PEIMS Data Standards*, other reporting instructions, and contact information for inquiries. Through a Listserv service, individuals can request to be notified by e-mail any time new information related to PEIMS is posted on the TEA web site.

Accountability Safeguards and Consequences of Inaccurate Reporting. After initial processing of district data submissions is complete, data used to rate districts and campuses undergo routine screening before and after release of the accountability ratings to validate data integrity. In 1998-99, data inquiries focused on underreported students – those prior-year Grade 7-12 students for whom the district did not submit either an enrollment record (for re-enrolling students) or a leaver record (for graduates, dropouts, and other leavers). In 1999-2000, a comprehensive desk audit of dropout reporting was implemented as part of the standard accountability system safeguards. A combination of broad analyses of leaver data quality and analyses of specific leaver reason codes is currently used to identify districts with underreported students and leavers reported with an incorrect leaver reason code. Because there is limited staff available to conduct inquiries, however, data investigations focus on the most serious problems identified. Districts investigated for data quality issues in the prior year will automatically be subject to an examination of their current-year data to determine whether continued problems likely exist. Districts with data problems are first contacted by telephone and letter. If questions remain, an investigation team visits the district to examine documentation.

Policymakers are currently focusing on the number of underreported students as a measure of the accuracy of dropout reporting. In 1999-2000, TEA gave districts a list of potential underreported students in their fall data submissions. Districts then had the opportunity to correct errors and omissions before the resubmission deadline. Following resubmission, additional processing was done to finalize the list of underreported students by removing students from the list if a leaver record had been submitted but failed to match the prior-year data because of errors in the student identifying information the prior year. Although total underreported students dropped dramatically statewide, from 3.6 percent in 1997-98 to 1.1 percent in 1998-99, rates vary greatly by district, from 0 percent (full reporting) to 95 percent of the student body unaccounted for. Underreporting by districts may be due to inadequate tracking or accounting, mistakes such as incorrect student identifying information, continued misunderstanding of reporting requirements, or purposeful manipulation.

In 1999, following analysis of the first leaver data collection, new accountability ratings were created for districts and campuses with serious and systematic data reporting problems. The new district rating (*Unacceptable: Data Quality*) and new campus rating (*Acceptable: Data Issues*) were assigned when errors in the leaver data seriously compromised the ability of TEA to calculate dropout rates. Initially, two districts and 32 campuses were assigned the new ratings. A number of ratings were changed as a result of investigations conducted following release of the ratings. When 1999 ratings were finalized, four districts received the *Unacceptable: Data Quality* rating due to errors in leaver data, and 36 campuses received the *Acceptable: Data Issues* rating.

Accountability ratings for districts with leaver data problems were handled differently in 2000. Districts that exceeded a threshold for either the number or percentage of underreported students in Grades 7-12 could not be rated higher than *Academically Acceptable* in 2000. The thresholds are 1,000 or more underreported students or 10 percent or more underreported students. (Lower thresholds could trigger data inquiries but not immediate rating consequences.) The new label for the district rating assigned because of poor data quality is *Suspended: Data Inquiry*. The district rating will be in effect until such time as an agency investigation determines an appropriate performance-based rating. If the commissioner assigns a district rating of *Suspended: Data Inquiry* based on serious and systematic data reporting problems, then campuses affected by the data in question will also be rated *Suspended: Data Inquiry* until such time as an agency investigation determines otherwise. No districts or campuses received the *Suspended: Data Inquiry* ratings in 2000. However, nine districts that would otherwise have been rated *Recognized* or *Exemplary* received *Academically Acceptable* ratings in 2000 due to large percentages of underreported students.

The following recommendations related to dropout data quality are intended to complement rather than replace the processes currently in place to ensure data quality.

Recommendations

4. ***Improve the Data Submission Process.***
   - Extend the resubmission deadline for the PEIMS fall data submission.

     The PEIMS fall submission is due in early December, and the deadline for resubmission is mid-January. Since most district staff are not on duty during the winter break, they lose valuable time for data review and correction. Extending the resubmission deadline by

even one or two weeks would assist districts in their efforts to improve leaver data quality without adversely affecting availability of the data for reporting and accountability.

- Simplify and clarify PEIMS leaver reason codes and documentation requirements.

  Leaver reason coding instructions and documentation requirements are not always clear to the individuals coding data for the PEIMS submission.

- Anytime legislation requiring a change in leaver data reporting requirements is enacted, establish effective dates that allow districts sufficient time to modify data reporting systems and train staff.

  New legislation often requires that changes to the data reporting requirements be put in place immediately, without prior notification to ESCs, school districts, or software vendors. This is particularly problematic with leaver coding changes because districts are reporting prior-year data. Rushing implementation almost guarantees data problems and public disappointment the first year.

- Improve matching of student records from different PEIMS data submissions.

  The ability to match student records across data submissions is critical to effective use of desk audits to monitor leaver data quality and to calculating longitudinal performance measures.

- Offer continuing education credit to individuals who complete PEIMS training.

  Although the state does not require training for PEIMS coordinators and others working with the PEIMS data submission, offering continuing education credit for training could serve as an incentive to both individuals and districts.

5. ***Report a Data Quality Measure***

   - Report a measure of dropout data quality, such as percent underreported students or percent of students whose status cannot be determined due to errors, on the annual district and campus AEIS reports.

     Reporting of percentage of students exempted as a safeguard measure for the assessment indicator has helped bring attention to the issue of excessive test exemptions. It would be consistent to add a safeguard measure for the dropout indicator.

6. ***Strengthen Leaver Data Auditing and Penalties.***

   - Direct school district independent financial auditors to audit submitted leaver codes, perhaps in a sample of districts. (TEC §44.008)

     Independent auditors who are already in the district could expand the scope of their work and provide an additional safeguard against errors and omissions in district leaver data submissions. Auditors would report to TEA on the status of underreported students, students withdrawing with intent to enroll elsewhere, and other identified areas of concern.

   - Phase in additional analyses of leaver data as part of the comprehensive desk audits of school district leaver data submissions, and investigate districts with irregularities.

     Accountability system safeguards are the only mechanism currently in p[illegible]ce, outside of standard data reporting requirements, to monitor the quality of student d[illegible] submissions and ensure the accuracy and consistency of these submissions. Based o[illegible]mprovements

between 1998-99 and 1999-2000 in underreported students and verified enrollment of students withdrawing with intent to enroll elsewhere, it appears that the accountability system safeguards are effective. Additional analyses would include examining district trends and comparing district patterns in use of leaver reason codes to state or regional norms, checking for consistency with other data submitted for the same student, and identifying anomalies in use of leaver reason codes through analysis of other data.

- Lower the threshold for the number and percentage of underreported students that triggers a data investigation, and continue to attach accountability rating consequences to high numbers or percentages of underreported students.

  Although there are situations in which districts cannot eliminate underreported students from their data submissions, failure to report all students under the leaver data reporting system will continue to cast doubt on the accuracy of dropout reporting.

- Add to the accreditation sanctions currently available to the commissioner of education sanctions designed specifically for use in districts with serious and systematic data reporting problems. (TEC §39.131)

  The current accreditation sanctions were developed for use in districts with academic performance problems rather than data reporting problems. Adding statutory sanctions that specifically relate to data quality would give the commissioner additional, and possibly more appropriate, options for districts that have serious and systematic data reporting problems with data used in the accountability rating system. Data reporting sanctions might give the commissioner the discretion to order the preparation and implementation of a data quality improvement plan that addresses the data quality issues under review, or to require that an outside auditor contracted at district expense certify district data submissions in addition to the superintendent.

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APPENDIX A

Leaver Reasons Coded for 1997-98 and 1998-99 Leavers

Code	Leaver Reason	1997-98	1998-99
Completed High School Program			
01*	Graduated	197,186	203,393
19*	Completed graduation requirements except passing exit-level TAAS	2,629	2,307
31*	Completed GED	6,801	7,943
63*	Graduated previously, returned to school, left again	64	83
64*	Completed GED previously, returned to school, left again	843	572
Moved to Other Educational Setting			
28*	Intent to enroll in a public school in Texas	108,658	129,902
29*	Intent to enroll in a private school in Texas	6,896	7,815
73*	No intent but documented enrollment in a public school in Texas	26,777	19,543
74*	No intent but documented enrollment in a private school in Texas		868
07*	Intent to enroll in school out of state	29,597	34,807
06*	No intent but documented enrollment in school out of state	6,756	6,110
21*	Official transfer to another Texas public school district	5,812	6,471
22*	Alternative program working toward GED or diploma	17,851	19,772
72*	Alternative program by court order		281
70	Alternative program not in compliance with compulsory attendance	3,103	1,500
71	Alternative program not working toward GED or diploma		1,092
60*	Withdrew for home schooling	8,632	11,086
24*	Entered college early to pursue degree	332	441
25	Entered college but not pursuing degree	36	28
Withdrawn by District			
17*	Expelled for criminal behavior	668	520
26	Expelled for reasons other than criminal behavior	497	395
62*	Withdrawn for non-residence or falsified enrollment information	683	1,553
67*	Withdrawn for failure to provide immunization records	--	9
Other Reasons – School Related			
11	Withdrew/left school because of low or failing grades	515	474
12	Withdrew/left school because of poor attendance	9,007	8,310
13	Withdrew/left school because of language problems	11	14
27	Withdrew/left school because of TAAS failure	270	350
14	Withdrew/left school because of age	1,124	2,222
Other Reasons – Job Related			
02	Withdrew/left school to pursue a job	2,124	2,773
04	Withdrew/left school to join the military	79	89
Other Reasons – Family Related			
08	Withdrew/left school because of pregnancy	560	615
09	Withdrew/left school because of marriage	799	707
15	Withdrew/left school due to homelessness/non-permanent residency	131	250
66*	Removed from the district by Child Protective Services	395	722
Other Reasons			
03*	Student died	795	727
10	Withdrew/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problem	54	67
16*	Returned to home country	7,515	9,876
30*	Withdrew/left school to enter a health care facility	776	1,210
61*	Incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	5,329	5,163
65	Did not return to school after completing a JJAEP term	96	127
99	Other (unknown or not listed)	19,809	18,193

* School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

APPENDIX B

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes and Documentation Requirements

The attached table provides an expanded definition and specific guidelines on acceptable documentation for each of the leaver reason codes listed in Code Table C162 of the Texas Education Agency *2000-2001 PEIMS Data Standards*. The table is organized into the following broad categories of leavers:

Completed High School Program
Moved to Other Educational Setting
Withdrawn by District
Other Reasons (School Related, Job Related, Family Related, and Other)

Compulsory Attendance

Several leaver reason codes make reference to the compulsory attendance law, Texas Education Code §§25.085–25.086. The compulsory attendance law requires students to attend school until they are 18 years old. There are two exceptions to this basic law that are relevant to leaver reporting. The exceptions are:

The student is at least 17 years old, is attending a GED preparation program, and one of the following four conditions have been met:
(1) the student has the permission of their parent or guardian to attend the program
(2) the student is required by court order to attend the program
(3) the student has established a residence separate from their parent or guardian
(4) the student is homeless

The student is at least 16 years old, is attending a GED preparation program, and one of the following two conditions have been met:
(1) the student is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the student under court order
(2) the student is attending a Job Corps program

Acceptable Documentation

Acceptable documentation consists of either a documented request for transcript or a written signed statement from the parent or guardian. Students who are married (or 18 years or older) may sign their own statement. Acceptable documentation also includes verification by the superintendent or authorized representative that the child has been enrolled in a nonpublic school or another program or institution leading to the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate, has returned to their home country, is being home schooled, has enrolled in college in a program leading to an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, or has other similar circumstances.

Documentation must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district. The district should have a written policy stating who can act as an authorized representative for purposes of signing withdrawal forms and other leaver reason documentation.

Withdrawal forms completed by the parent/guardian or adult student should be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student as well as the district representative. Adult students include students who are 18 years old or older, students of any age who are married, and students who have established a separate residence from their parents or guardians.

An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student. Written

documentation of oral statements made by the parent/guardian or adult student (in person or by telephone) is acceptable documentation in some situations if it is signed and dated by the district representative.

A statement by an adult neighbor or other adult (other than the parent/guardian or adult student) is allowed only to document a student returning to home country. In all other cases the documentation must be provided by the parent/guardian or adult student, or an educational or other institution.

Documentation is required for dropout reason codes as well as other leaver reason codes.

Documentation supporting use of a leaver reason code must exist in the district at the time the leaver data are submitted (no later than the mid-January PEIMS Submission 1 resubmission date).

Merits of leaver documentation are assessed at the time the documentation is requested during a data inquiry investigation. Determination of the acceptability of documentation is made by the professional staff conducting the investigation. These guidelines describe the most common types of documentation the investigator would expect to find supporting use of each leaver reason code. Other documentation that represents good business practice and shows a good faith effort on the part of the district to properly report leaver status will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Consideration will be given to different interpretations of documentation requirements followed by districts before these guidelines were released.

Intent to Enroll in Another School or Program. Intent to enroll elsewhere must be documented at the time the student withdraws or quits attending school – generally within 10 days of the last day the student attended school. If intent is not documented at that time, the district must acquire documentation that the student is enrolled elsewhere. For students who do not return to school in the fall after completing the prior school year, intent must be documented at the end of the prior school year.

Acceptable documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program is a copy of the withdrawal form (or similar form), completed at the time the student quits attending school in the district, and signed and dated by the parent/guardian or adult student (both signatures are not required) and an authorized representative of the school district (typically the withdrawing agent). The withdrawal form should indicate either where the family is moving, the name of the school the student will be attending, or that the student will be home schooled. An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student.

A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student written at the time the student quits attending school in the district, stating that the student will enroll elsewhere or will be home schooled, is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student made at the time the student quits attending school in the district, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.

Enrollment in Another School or Program. Acceptable documentation of enrollment in another school or educational program is a records request from the school or educational program in which the student is enrolled. Telephone requests must be documented in writing, including the date of the call, the name of the school requesting the records, the name of the person making the request, and the name of the person who received the call.

A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is enrolled in another school or program is also acceptable documentation. The letter must state the name and location of the school or program in which the student is enrolled, or that the student is being home schooled. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student providing the name and location of the school or program in which the student is enrolled, or stating that the student is being home schooled, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
Completed High School Program	
01* Student graduated	Use for students who meet all graduation requirements (which includes passing the exit-level TAAS) at any time during the prior school year, including the summer following the close of the prior year. To graduate a student must satisfy the requirements under 19 TAC Chapter 74, Subchapter B. Special education students must satisfy requirements under 19 TAC §89.1070. Students who complete a GED are not reported as graduates. Students who complete all graduation requirements in one school year, but do not pass the exit-level TAAS until a later year, are reported as graduates in the year in which the TAAS test is passed. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Transcript showing sufficient credits, successful completion of TAAS, and a graduation seal.
19* Student failed exit TAAS, but has met all other graduation requirements	Use for students who completed all other graduation requirements but did not pass the exit-level TAAS before the end of the school year, and did not enroll in school the next year. If the student does enroll the next year, a leaver record is not submitted. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Transcript showing sufficient credits.
31* Student completed the GED, and district has acceptable documentation and student has not returned to school	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the GED certificate or some other written document provided by the testing company showing completion of the GED.
63* Student had graduated in a previous school year, returned to school, and then left again	This code may be used for students who graduated in the reporting district or from another district, state, or country. Students who graduate mid-year should be reported as graduates even if they return to school later in the same year. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Transcript showing sufficient credits, successful completion of TAAS, and a graduation seal.
64* Student had received a GED in a previous school year, returned to school to work toward the completion of a high school diploma, and then left	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the GED certificate or some other written document provided by the testing company showing completion of the GED.

*School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
Moved to Other Educational Setting	
28* Student withdrew from school with **declared intent** to enroll in another **Texas public school district**	Student withdrawn from school and parent/ guardian or adult student indicated at time of withdrawal that the student would be enrolling in another Texas public school district, ***including charter schools*** (code 28), a private school in Texas (code 29), or a public or private school outside Texas (code 07). The district may or may not receive a records request from the other school, and is not required to follow up with the school the parent/guardian or adult student indicated the student would be attending. This code should be used when the parent/ guardian or adult student indicates at the time the student quits attending school that the intent is for the student to enroll elsewhere. If the student intends to enroll in another school in the district, a leaver record is not submitted. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program.
29* Student withdrew from school with **declared intent** to enroll in **a private school within Texas**	
07* Student withdrew from school with **declared intent** to enroll in another public or private **school outside Texas**	
73* Student withdrew from/left school with **no declared intent** to enroll elsewhere, but the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in another **school district in Texas**	These codes would be used in the following situations: (1) The parent/guardian or adult student withdraws the student but does not indicate at that time that the student will be enrolling elsewhere. They may indicate some other reason for the student to be leaving school or not indicate any reason. However, the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student that the student is enrolled in another public school district in Texas, ***including charter schools*** (code 73); private school in Texas (code74); or public or private school outside Texas (code 6). (2) The student quits attending school without withdrawing but the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student. (3) Student moves during the summer without withdrawing but the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student. The district would change the original code assigned to the student, or add this code, when the records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student is received. If the original withdrawal date for the student is later than the date the student enrolled in the other school, the withdrawal date must be changed and all attendance accounting records affected by this change must be updated. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.
74* Student withdrew from/left school with **no declared intent** to enroll elsewhere, but the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in a **private school in Texas**	
06* Student withdrew from/left school with **no declared intent** to enroll elsewhere, but the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in another school district or private **school outside Texas**	
21* Student officially transferred to another Texas public school district through completion of ACC-041B, Transfers Prior to May 1	Form ACC-041B, Transfers Prior to May 1, is the official transfer form used when a student who lives in one school district transfers to a school in a neighboring school district. These transfers are approved by the superintendents of both districts; the students are coded with an ADA eligibility code of 3 or 6 in the districts to which they transfer. This code should be used by districts that do not serve all grade levels for students in grades 7 or higher who have completed all grades offered in the home district and are being transferred to a neighboring district. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Required documentation is a copy of the ACC-041B, Transfers Prior to May 1, completed and signed by both superintendents or their authorized representatives.

 *School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
22* Student withdrew from/left school to attend an alternative program (GED, JTPA, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.), is in compliance with compulsory attendance laws (TEC Sections 25.085-25.086), and district has acceptable documentation that the student is working toward the completion of high school (diploma or GED certificate)	Use for students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in state approved Adult Education and Family Literacy programs. If the student enrolls in one of these state-approved programs, the district does not need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws (state approved programs will not accept students unless they are in compliance) and does not need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED (this is the only option these state-approved programs offer). Also use for migrant students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in U.S. Department of Labor High School Equivalency Programs (HEP). If the student enrolls in a HEP, the district does not need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws and does not need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED. Also use for students who are at least 16 years old and leave the district to enroll in Job Corps training programs. Job Corps is the only program in which 16 year olds can voluntarily enroll and still be in compliance with compulsory attendance laws. If the student enrolls in a Job Corps program, the district does not need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws and does not need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED. Also use for students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in programs other than state-approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps programs to work toward completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate. For alternative programs other than state-approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps programs the district must determine that the student is working toward a high school diploma or GED certificate because these programs may offer students other options such as job training. For 17 year old students, the district must also determine that the student meets one of three additional conditions of the compulsory attendance law: student has parent/ guardian permission to attend the program, student has established a residence separate from the parent/ guardian, or student is homeless. The district is not required to track the student's attendance or progress in the alternative program or to ascertain that the student actually obtains a high school diploma or GED certificate. Do not use for students 17 or younger who are court-ordered into an alternative program – use code 72. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. If the program is not a state approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps program, the documentation must indicate that the student is in compliance with the compulsory attendance law and is pursuing a high school diploma or GED certificate. Written documentation of an oral statement by a representative of the alternative program, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district, is acceptable.
70 Student withdrew from school to attend an alternative program (GED, JTPA, HEP, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.) but is not in compliance with compulsory attendance laws	Use this code for students who leave the district to enroll in an alternative program but are not in compliance with the compulsory attendance law. The student may or may not be working toward a high school diploma or GED certificate. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student intends to or has enrolled in an alternative program.

*School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
71 Student withdrew from school to attend an alternative program (GED, JTPA, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.), is in compliance with compulsory attendance laws, but district does not have acceptable documentation that student is working toward completion of high school (diploma or GED certificate)	Use for students who are at least 18 years old and leave the district to enroll in alternative programs but are not working toward completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate. For example, a student who leaves the district to enroll in a job training program could be assigned leaver reason code 71. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or adult student) indicating that the student intends to or has enrolled in an alternative program.
72* Student was withdrawn from school by court order to attend a specific alternative program, is under compulsory attendance age, and district has a copy of the court order on file	Use for students 17 and younger who are court-ordered into an alternative program. The district is not required to confirm enrollment or attendance in the court-ordered program. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Copy of the court order.
60* Student withdrew at request of student, parent, guardian, or other person with legal control of the student for home schooling	Student withdrawn from or left school and parent/guardian or adult student indicates at time of withdrawal that the student will be home schooled or when contacted by district that the student is being home schooled. The district is not required to obtain evidence that the program being provided meets educational standards. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.
24* Student withdrew from/left school to enter college with documentation that he or she is working towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree	This code is for students who leave secondary school to enter college early. It should be used for students who are enrolled full-time (at least 9 credit hours per semester). ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. Documentation of enrollment in a college or university must indicate that the student is enrolled full-time in an academic program.
25 Student withdrew from/left school to enter college with no evidence of working towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree	This code can be used for students who enroll in college but do not meet the criteria described under code 24. For example, a student who enrolls in one electronics course at the local community college could be assigned leaver reason code 25. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student intends to enroll or has enrolled in college.

42 *School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
Withdrawn by District	
78* Student was expelled for behavior qualifying as a Class C misdemeanor or worse (Code of Criminal Procedure), the behavior occurred on school property or at school-related functions, and failure to attend school results from either (1) adjudication for conduct that was delinquent or indicates a need for supervision per Section 51.03 of the Family Code, or (2) conviction of and sentencing for an offense under the Penal Code	This code is used for situations in which: • the student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007, and • the term of expulsion has not expired or the student's failure to attend school is due to court action. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the expulsion.
79 Student was expelled for behavior qualifying as a Class C misdemeanor or worse (Code of Criminal Procedure), the behavior occurred on school property or at school-related functions, but failure to attend school is neither a result of (1) adjudication for conduct that was delinquent or indicates a need for supervision per Section 51.03 of the Family Code, nor (2) conviction of and sentencing for an offense under the Penal Code	This code is used for situations in which: • the student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007, and • the term of expulsion has expired, and • the student's failure to attend school is not due to court action. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the expulsion.
26 Student was expelled (due to reasons other than criminal behavior), with no further participation in a school or educational program to continue working towards the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate	All expulsions are included in TEC §37.007. Refer to leaver reason codes 78 and 79.
62* Student was withdrawn by the district when it was discovered that the student was not a resident or had falsified enrollment information	***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the withdrawal.
67* Student was withdrawn from school after failing to provide immunization records within 30 days of enrollment	With few exceptions, students enrolling in Texas public schools must be immunized against specified contagious diseases. Under Texas Department of Health rules districts must provisionally admit students who have begun the required immunizations but may withdraw those who do not complete the immunizations within 30 days. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the withdrawal.

*School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
76 Student age 18 or over, district revoked enrollment because student had more than 5 unexcused absences in a semester	A 1999 change to the compulsory attendance law (TEC §25.085) allows districts to revoke for the remainder of the school year the enrollment of a student age 18 or older who has more than 5 unexcused absences in a semester. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the revocation.
Other Reasons	
School-Related Concerns	
11 Student withdrew from/left school because of low or failing grades	These codes should be used if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the reason the student is leaving school or has left school is because of low or failing grades (code 11), poor attendance (code 12), limited English proficiency (code 13), age (code 14), or TAAS failure (code 27). Whether the parent/guardian or student completes withdrawal papers or the student just stops coming to school is not relevant to assigning these codes. These codes may also be assigned based on district review of the student's history of attendance and academic performance before leaving school. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or has left school because of low or failing grades (code 11), poor attendance (code 12), limited English proficiency (code 13), age (code 14), or TAAS failure (code 27).
12 Student withdrew from/left school because of poor attendance, enrollment not revoked by district	
13 Student withdrew from/left school because of language problems	
14 Student withdrew from/left school because of age	
27 Student failed exit TAAS, has not met all other graduation requirements, and has no evidence of further participation in a school or educational program to continue working towards the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate	
Job-Related Concerns	
02 Student withdrew from/ left school to pursue a job	These codes should be used if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the reason the student is leaving school or has left school is to pursue a job (code 02) or join the military (code 04). Whether the parent/guardian or adult student completes withdrawal papers or the student just stops coming to school is not relevant to assigning these codes. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school to pursue a job (code 02) or join the military (code 04).
04 Student withdrew from/ left school to join the military	
Family-Related Concerns	
08 Student withdrew from/left school because of pregnancy	This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school because of pregnancy. This code should not be assigned based only on the fact that the student is pregnant at the time she leaves school. This code can be used for male or female students. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of pregnancy.

44 *School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
09 Student withdrew from/left school to marry	This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school because of marriage. The district is not required to confirm that the student is married. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of marriage.
15 Student withdrew from/left school due to homelessness or non-permanent residency	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of homelessness or non-permanent residency.
66* Student was removed from the district by Child Protective Services (CPS) and the district has not been informed of the student's current status or enrollment	This code applies only to Child Protective Services. Private agencies that provide asylum for students do not have the legal authority to remove students from school. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting this withdrawal.
Other Concerns	
03* Student died while enrolled in school or during the summer break after completing the prior school year	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the death certificate or obituary.
10 Student withdrew from/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems	This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Student does not have to be admitted into a treatment program. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or adult student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems.
16* Student withdrew from/left school with documentation of having returned to home country, but with no evidence of enrollment in school in home country	Use for students whose families are leaving the United States. The citizenship of the student is not relevant in assigning this code. This code can also be used for foreign exchange students. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the Transfer Document for Binational Migrant Student completed at the time the student withdraws from school, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district. Acceptable documentation is also a copy of the withdrawal form (or similar form) signed and dated by the parent/guardian or adult student (both signatures are not required) and an authorized representative of the school district (typically the withdrawing agent). The withdrawal form should indicate that the student is leaving school because the family is returning to the home country and should specify the destination. An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student. A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is leaving school because the family is returning to the home county is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian, adult student, or other adult with knowledge of the family's whereabouts, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district.

*School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

PEIMS Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Code Translation	**Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements**
30* Student withdrew from/left school to enter a health care facility	Health care facilities provide medical and/or rehabilitation services. They include hospitals, nursing homes, cancer treatment centers, burn centers, drug and rehabilitation facilities, and mental health treatment facilities. In Texas, school districts are required to serve students in health care facilities located within the boundaries of the district. If the student is being served by the district, a leaver record is not submitted. Use this code for private health care facilities that provide their own educational programs. Also use for students who are entering a health care facility outside the district if the district does not know which school district will be providing educational services to the student. Use for students who are entering health care facilities outside Texas. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. These requirements also apply to students withdrawing from/ leaving school to enter a health-care facility.
61* Student was incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	This code applies to juveniles as well as adult students incarcerated in facilities such as juvenile detention centers or jails outside the boundaries of the district. In Texas, school districts are required to serve students incarcerated in facilities located within the boundaries of the district. If the student is being served by the district, a leaver record is not submitted. Do not use this code for students who are placed in a JJAEP. If the student is enrolled in a JJAEP, a leaver record is not submitted. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is written documentation from the facility in which the student is incarcerated. A signed statement from the parent providing the name and location of the facility in which the student is incarcerated is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian providing the name and location of the facility in which the student is incarcerated, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.
65 Student did not return to school after completing a JJAEP term, and the student has not graduated or completed/received a GED	Do not use this code for students who enroll in another school district or private school after completing a JJAEP term.
99 Other (reason unknown or not listed above)	This code is used for students who are withdrawn by the school district after a period of time because they have quit attending school and their reason for leaving is not known. It is also used for students who withdrew from/left school for reasons not listed above.

 *School leavers coded with this Leaver Reason Code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

APPENDIX C

Historical Annual Dropout Rates by Student Groups

	Number of Students, Grades 7-12	Number of Dropouts	Percentage of All Dropouts	Annual Dropout Rate
1987-88				
African American	194,373	16,364	17.9%	8.4%
Hispanic	396,411	34,911	38.2%	8.8%
White	744,254	38,305	42.0%	5.1%
Other	28,160	1,727	1.9%	6.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All Students	1,363,198	91,307	100.0%	6.7%
1988-89				
African American	193,299	14,525	17.6%	7.5%
Hispanic	412,904	33,456	40.6%	8.1%
White	724,622	32,921	40.0%	4.5%
Other	29,290	1,423	1.7%	4.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All Students	1,360,115	82,325	100.0%	6.1%
1989-90				
African American	192,802	13,012	18.6%	6.7%
Hispanic	427,032	30,857	44.1%	7.2%
White	711,264	24,854	35.5%	3.5%
Other	30,396	1,317	1.9%	4.3%
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All Students	1,361,494	70,040	100.0%	5.1%
1990-91				
African American	192,504	9,318	17.3%	4.8%
Hispanic	444,246	24,728	45.8%	5.6%
White	703,813	18,922	35.1%	2.7%
Other	32,075	997	1.8%	3.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	399,025	14,755	27.3%	3.7%
All Students	1,372,738	53,965	100.0%	3.9%
1991-92				
African American	196,915	9,370	17.5%	4.8%
Hispanic	462,587	25,320	47.4%	5.5%
White	712,858	17,745	33.2%	2.5%
Other	34,478	985	1.8%	2.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	442,139	15,614	29.2%	3.5%
All Students	1,406,838	53,420	100.0%	3.8%
1992-93				
African American	216,741	7,840	18.1%	3.6%
Hispanic	516,212	21,512	49.6%	4.2%
White	760,143	13,236	30.5%	1.7%
Other	40,101	814	1.9%	2.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	463,452	13,515	31.1%	2.9%
All Students	1,533,198	43,402	100.0%	2.8%
1993-94				
African American	221,013	7,090	17.6%	3.2%
Hispanic	537,594	20,851	51.9%	3.9%
White	775,361	11,558	28.7%	1.5%
Other	42,047	712	1.8%	1.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	502,494	13,537	33.7%	2.7%
All Students	1,576,015	40,211	100.0%	2.6%
1994-95				
African American	227,684	5,130	17.1%	2.3%
Hispanic	556,684	14,928	49.9%	2.7%
White	789,481	9,367	31.3%	1.2%
Other	43,673	493	1.6%	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	535,480	10,176	34.0%	1.9%
All Students	1,617,522	29,918	100.0%	1.8%
1995-96				
African American	234,175	5,397	18.5%	2.3%
Hispanic	580,041	14,649	50.2%	2.5%
White	802,509	8,639	29.6%	1.1%
Other	45,853	522	1.8%	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	555,318	9,608	32.9%	1.7%
All Students	1,662,578	29,207	100.0%	1.8%
1996-97				
African American	240,142	4,737	17.6%	2.0%
Hispanic	603,067	13,859	51.5%	2.3%
White	815,175	7,894	29.3%	1.0%
Other	47,588	411	1.5%	0.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	595,036	9,393	34.9%	1.6%
All Students	1,705,972	26,901	100.0%	1.6%
1997-98				
African American	244,987	5,152	18.7%	2.1%
Hispanic	619,855	14,127	51.3%	2.3%
White	828,660	7,734	28.1%	0.9%
Other	49,637	537	1.9%	1.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	626,080	9,911	36.0%	1.6%
All Students	1,743,139	27,550	100.0%	1.6%
1998-99				
African American	248,748	5,682	20.6%	2.3%
Hispanic	638,041	14,413	52.2%	2.3%
White	833,274	7,006	25.4%	0.8%
Other	53,054	491	1.8%	0.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	616,720	9,391	34.0%	1.5%
All Students	1,773,117	27,592	100.0%	1.6%

Source: TEA PEIMS, 1988-89 – 1999-2000.

Note. Parts may not add to totals because of rounding or missing student data.

APPENDIX D

Dropout Data Collection and Reporting in Other States

	Data Collection			Type of Rate					Student Groups			Public Reports			
	Unit of Collection	Grades Included	NCES Definition	Annual Dropout Rate	Longitudinal Dropout Rate	Completion	Graduation	Attrition	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Socioeconomic Status	State	District/County	School	Used in Accountability System
Alabama	student	9-12	X	X	projected				X	X		X	X	X	no
Arizona	school	7-12		X			X		X	X		X	X	X	no
California	district	9-12	X	X	projected		X		X	X		X	X		no
Colorado	district	7-12		X		X	X		X	X		X	X		no
Florida	student	9-12		X			X		X	X		X	X	X	yes
Georgia	district	6-12		X		X	X					X	X	X	no
Illinois	district	9-12	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	no
Indiana	district	7-12	X	X			X					X	X		yes
Kentucky	district	9-12	X	X					X	X		X	X	X	yes
Louisiana	student	7-12	X	X								X	X	X	yes
Maryland	district	9-12		X					X	X		X	X	X	yes
Massachusetts	district	9-12	X	X	projected				X	X		X	X	X	no
Michigan	district	9-12		X		X	estimated					X	X	X	no
Minnesota	student	7-12	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X		no
Missouri	district	9-12		X			X		X			X	X		no
New Jersey	student	16+ yrs		X					X	X		X	X	X	yes
New York	district	9-12	X	X								X	X	X	no
North Carolina	district	9-12		X								X	X		no
Ohio	district	7-12	X	X			X					X	X		yes
Pennsylvania	district	7-12	X	X	(2001)				X	X		X	X	X	no
Tennessee	district	9-12	X	X	X				X	X		X	X		yes
Texas	student	7-12		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	yes
Virginia	district	7-12		X			X		X	X		X	X		no
Washington	student	9-12		X			X					X	X		no
Wisconsin	district	7-12	X	X			X					X	X	X	no

Legend	
Data Collection	
Unit of Collection	How are data collected by the education agency -- student level or aggregated to the school, district, or county level?
Grades Included	What grades are included in the data collection?
NCES Definition	Does the agency use the NCES definition of a dropout?
Type of Rate	
Annual Dropout Rate	Does the agency report an annual dropout rate?
Longitudinal Dropout Rate	Does the agency report a longitudinal dropout rate?
Completion	Does the agency report a completion rate?
Graduation	Does the agency report a graduation rate?
Attrition	Does the agency report an attrition rate?
Student Groups	
Race/Ethnicity	Does the agency disaggregate information by race/ethnicity?
Gender	Does the agency disaggregate information by gender?
Socioeconomic Status	Does the agency disaggregate information by socioeconomic status?
Public Reports	
State	Does the agency report a state dropout rate?
District/County	Does the agency report dropout rates by school district or county?
School	Does the agency report dropout rates by school/campus?
Used in Accountability System	Is the dropout rate used in a system to rate school or district performance?

State Web Site Addresses	
Alabama	http://www.alsde.edu/
Arizona	http://ade.state.az.us/
California	http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/
Colorado	http://www.cde.state.co.us/
Florida	http://www.firn.edu/doe/
Georgia	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/index.asp
Illinois	http://www.isbe.state.il.us/
Indiana	http://www.doe.state.in.us/
Kentucky	http://www.kde.state.ky.us/
Louisiana	http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp
Maryland	http://www.msde.state.md.us/
Massachusetts	http://www.doe.mass.edu/
Michigan	http://www.mde.state.mi.us/
Minnesota	http://www.educ.state.mn.us/
Missouri	http://services.dese.state.mo.us/
New Jersey	http://www.state.nj.us/education/
New York	http://www.nysed.gov/
North Carolina	http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/
Ohio	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/
Pennsylvania	http://www.state.pa.us/PAPower/
Tennessee	http://www.state.tn.us/education/homepage.htm
Texas	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/
Virginia	http://www.pen.k12.va.us/
Washington	http://www.k12.wa.us/
Wisconsin	http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/